

ESTATES GOVERNANCE STEERING GROUP SUMMARY TEMPLATE

Subject Area	Fire Safety Management (Specialist Estate Services)
Date of Report	11-Jul-25
Purpose of Report	Assurance

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Role	Trust Fire Safety Manager / HoS Specialist Estate Services

Section 01

Brief Summary update of Areas of Good Practice (bullet points)

This report provides an overview of the fire safety management performance, activities, and key developments within the Trust for the Qtr.01 of 2025 (01-Apr-25 to 30-Jun-25).

Challenging Issues of Concern (Including issues that are noted on Risk Registers)

1. **Delivery of Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs):**
 - 47% of all Fire Risk Assessments are overdue.
2. **Fire Safety Team Resource:**
 - Currently there are 4 Fire Prevention Officers within the Fire Safety Team. However a team of 10 is required to deliver the Trust Fire Safety Management objectives.
3. **Fire Safety Competency Framework:**
 - The Fire Prevention Officers will be required to undertake competency training, in order to complete suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessments to accord with Article 25 (Duties of employers to employees) of the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.
4. **Fire Safety Management Audits:**
 - There are several deficiencies affecting the completion of fire safety audits, and thus the Trust has a very limited assurance of compliance.
5. **Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Action Plans:**
 - Trust deficiencies with compliance to the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, has resulted in the Issue of two Statutory Action Plans (STH & DHH) with specified timelines for completion.
6. **Nominated Fire Officer (NFOs) Compliance.**
 - Only 32% of Nominated Fire Officer are completing their requisite fire safety duties.
7. **Corporate Fire Safety Training & Trust Training Needs Analysis (TNA).**
 - There is no evidence to suggest that a Trust Fire Safety Training Needs Analysis has ever been undertaken. Nor have detailed objectives been established to determine the validity of the Corporate Fire Safety Training

Areas of achievement/Improvement

1. **Team:**
 - 1 x Fire Prevention Band 5/6 link grade commenced on 01-May-25.
2. **Training:**
 - The Fire Prevention Officers are progressing through a Competency Framework.
3. **Development:**
 - The Fire Safety Management Working Group at DHH is progressing, and work is ongoing to establish similar groups at STH, LH & CAH.

Section 02

Challenging Issues of Concern (Including issues that are noted on Risk Registers)		
Challenges	Mitigations taken	Assurances
<p>Delivery of Fire Risk Assessments FRAs). 47% of all FRAs are overdue (199 of 423). Since Jun-23 the range of overdue FRAs has varied between 32% - 48%.</p>	<p>Priority has been given to the higher risk FRAs for acute & residential environments. Although with limited resources 64% of these yearly FRAs are out of date.</p>	<p>A Fire Safety Team resource paper was developed in Nov-24. But to date (11-Jul-25) no new resources have been made available.</p>
<p>Fire Safety Team Resource. Due to changes in the fire safety operating environment following the Grenfell Tower fire and the lack of a historic Trust fire safety resourcing task analysis, the current fire safety team is not well placed to achieve its operating objectives.</p>	<p>For the past 2 years the Fire Safety Team has been at ¾ resource capability (3 of 4 Fire Prevention Officers (NFOs). A new FPO was recruited in May-25. Due to the introduction of a National Competency standard for FPO's, the new recruit will be concentrating on the completion of low risk FRAs.</p>	<p>A Fire Safety Team resource paper was developed in Nov-24, which included a detailed evidence-based analysis to increase the Fire Safety Team to 10 personnel. But to date (11-Jul-25) no new resources have been made available. The Fire Prevention Officers complete weekly Task-Analysis forms detailing their activity, so that work streams can be monitored and prioritised.</p>
<p>Fire Safety Competency Framework. Following the Grenfell Tower fire (Jun-17), there has been a requirement to improve fire risk assessor competency and understanding. A new industry standard for fire risk assessors requires assessors to be competent at three levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation – Fire risk assessments within low-risk premises (115 within the Trust) • Intermediate – Fire risk assessments within medium-risk premises (194 within the Trust) • Advanced – Fire risk assessments within high-risk premises (114 within the Trust) 	<p>The Fire Prevention Officers will be required to undertake the courses, in order to complete suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessments to accord with Article 25 (Duties of employers to employees) of the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.</p>	<p>A business case has been approved authorising the completion of the courses. However it will be some 3-years before all the FPOs are fully compliant, and any new FPOs will have to undertake the competency training. Our main regulator (Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)) has to likewise complete the same training, and the HM Fire Service Inspectorate Independent Inspection of the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service, identified significant deficiencies in the ability to conduct statutory fire safety audits.</p>
<p>Fire Safety Management Audits. Audits are typically completed at three levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Party – NIFRS & RQIA • 2nd Party – BSO & Authorised Fire Engineer • 1st Party – Line Management 	<p>Unfortunately there are several deficiencies affecting the completion of fire safety audits, and thus the Trust has a very limited assurance of compliance:</p> <p>3rd Party – NIFRS has significant resource & competency issues to undertake audits. RQIA does not have a Fire Safety SME. 2nd Party – BSO does not have a Fire Safety SME and the Trust does not have an appointed Authorised Fire Engineer. 1st Party – The Fire Safety Team is under resourced to complete this function, as other safety critical tasks take priority.</p>	<p>A business case has been approved authorising the use of an Authorised Fire Safety Engineer to complete annual 2nd Party audits.</p>

<p>NIFRS Action Plans. Following NIFRS statutory audits they have issued two Action Plans with defined completion dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STH – Originally issued 10-Sep-24, two extensions have been agreed. The final deadline is 29-Aug-25, if actions not significantly progressed by then, NIFRS will likely issue an Enforcement Notice on the Trust. • DHH – Issued 13-Jun-25, deadline for completion of Actions is 04-Dec-25. 	<p>Unfortunately there are several factors affecting the completion of the Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust has never previously had defined Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPMs) for Fire Door surveys and Fire Compartment surveys. Thus additional financial funding is required to establish these functions, including the remediation of any deficiencies post survey (this is a widespread issue throughout the Trust). • Fire Strategy documentation. Appointment of external Fire Safety Engineer(s) is required to complete comprehensive Fire Strategies (this is a widespread issue throughout the Trust). • Infrastructure issues. Significant funding is required to upgrade fire alarm systems, and to provide the requisite means of escape (fire evacuation lifts, stairwells and protected corridors). • External cladding. A section of the cladding at STH is required to be removed to determine if it is fit for purpose, in terms of limiting fire spread. 	<p>Some remediation has been undertaken to address the required Actions. HoS's for Estate Operations and Estates Development should provide levels of compliance within their particular Estates Governance Reports.</p>
<p>Nominated Fire Officer (NFOs) Compliance. The Trust Fire Safety Management Policy and associated guidance, places requirements on Directorates to ensure that their NFO's are completing the requisite Fire Safety duties. However, to date (11-Jul-25) there is only a 32% level of compliance.</p>	<p>One of the main NFO responsibilities is to complete daily fire safety checks of their buildings/wards/departments. The NFOs are required to submit a weekly checklist form to provide assurance that the checks are being undertaken. The Fire Safety Team maintains an Information Management System to receive and monitor the returned NFO checklists.</p>	<p>The Fire Safety Team send monthly Compliance reports to the Directorate Fire Safety Representatives. The Fire Safety Team issue monthly Globals outlining the NFO duties. Issues with Compliance have been raised to the SLT (08-Jul-25).</p>
<p>Corporate Fire Safety Training & Trust Training Needs Analysis (TNA). The requirement for an Authorised Person (Fire Training) is detailed within Health Technical Memorandum 05-03: Operational provisions Part A: Training. Although this role has been required for some time, to date the Trust has not fulfilled this role, the Training Needs Analysis has not previously been formally undertaken, and thus there is presently a capability gap.</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that a comprehensive Trust Fire Safety Training Needs Analysis has ever been undertaken. Nor have detailed objectives been established to determine the validity of the Corporate Fire Safety Training. A TNA would review the fire safety training requirements for each discrete Trust role to meet their specific fire safety requirements and devised appropriate training plans.</p>	<p>A Fire Safety Team resource paper was developed in Nov-24, including the requirement for a dedicated Fire Training Officer. But to date (11-Jul-25) no new resources have been made available.</p>

Section 03

Areas of achievement/Improvement

Team:

- 1 x Fire Prevention Band 5/6 link grade commenced on 01-May-25.

The Fire Safety team is now at full strength, although a Fire Safety Team Resourcing Paper has been completed due to changes in the fire safety operating environment following the Grenfell Tower fire and due to the lack of a historic Trust fire safety resourcing task analysis, the current fire safety team is not well placed to achieve its operating objectives.

Training:

3 x FPOs have completed their Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety.

1 x FPO will commence their Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety in Jul-25.

1 x FPO commenced their Level 4 Diploma in Fire Safety in Apr-25.

3 x FPOs have completed the Association for Specialist Fire Protection (ASFP), Introduction to Passive Fire Protection Course. Note: this was an Estates initiative for all Estates Operations and Development Officers.

Development:

A Fire Safety Management Working Group has been established to improve local fire safety management. The DHH Group has met on several occasions, and the next Working Groups will be set up for STH (Nominees are awaited from the Directorates). This initiative will more closely monitor the roles/responsibilities of Nominated Fire Officers.

Trust Committee Reporting Schedule

The Trust Fire Committee is chaired by the Assistant Director of Estates and there is representation from across the relevant Directorates and Staff Side.

Any Other Items for noting (bullet points)

Include if applicable - Asset management/management of equipment (servicing and maintenance)

- Rationalisation of the FRA portfolio has reduced the need for ten FRAs, as the Trust had previously been undertaking these on behalf of a third party.
- In the past year (since 11-Jul-24) the following expenditure has been made to service/maintain fire equipment:

Servicing of Fire Equipment	
Fire Extinguisher	£39,969.89
Fire Blanket	£3,815.30
Fire Hydrants	£3,116.27
Dry Risers	£3,139.68
Evacuation Aids	£954.65
Total	£50,995.79

- In the past year (since 11-Jul-24) the following expenditure has been made to deliver fire safety training via an external contract:

Fire Safety Training Expenditure	
General Fire Awareness (Zoom)	£12,681.00
F2F Fire Awareness	£840.00
D/NFO (Zoom)	£11,040.00
F2F D/NFO	£1,920.00

Evac Chair	£5,880.00
Skipad	£480.00
Skisheet/Pad	£4,440.00
Total	£37,281.00

- Since 2024 there have been 22 smoking related fires across the Trust. A review of the Trust Smoke Free Sites policy is required to establish appropriate management requirements to mitigate the fire risks from smoking.